



Highlight

In February, the Ag & Water Quality Team helped coordinate our annual farm conference, "Farming for the Future." More than 120 people came together on March 13 to learn about understanding your soil, improving soil health, cost share opportunities, and more. Keynote speakers included soil researcher Dr. Alan Franzluebbbers from North Carolina and soil health consultant Barry Fisher of Indiana. VBCD staff also shared new research and cost-share programs that can offer funding to farmers to try conservation practices. Additional speakers presented during breakout sessions targeting grain, grazing, and forestry topics.

Pine/Mill/Mud 319 Project (EGLE 319 Grant)

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Water sampling from tile drains and streams 3/5/24 (storm sample), 3/13/24, 3/27/24
2. Farming for the Future conference 3/13/24
3. Farmer meetings 3/24/24, 3/27/24
4. Meeting with Xylem, Inc and UND 3/28/24
5. Outreach planning

Upcoming Activities

1. Water sampling
2. Farmer meetings
3. Cover crop verification
4. ISD Presentations 4/24/24
5. Quarterly reporting

USDA - Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Project (Notre Dame)

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Continue outreach activities



Van Buren Conservation District
March 2024 Ag Conservation/Water Quality Projects Board Report
Prepared 4/4/24

Staff: Colleen Forestieri Erin Fuller Carlie Southland

2. Contributed edits to informational videos developed by UND
3. Farming for the Future conference 3/13/24

Upcoming Activities

1. Continue planning education events for 2024
2. Begin preparing newsletter
3. ISD Presentations 4/24/24
4. Quarterly reporting

Other

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Weekly staff meetings
2. Introduction to Lakes class (Attendee)(Southland)
3. Prairie strip on-farm project meeting (Forestieri) 3/6/24
4. Homeschool Hangout curriculum planning 3/7/24
5. Soil & Water Conservation Society Seminar (Speaking)(Forestieri) 3/8/24
6. Climate smart advisory group meeting (Forestieri) 3/19/24
7. Meeting with Luke Petersen, TNC (Forestieri) 3/26/24
8. Develop social media posts
9. Grant tracking

Upcoming Activities

1. Water Quality Team Meeting 4/2/24
2. Tree sale 4/6/24 - 4/13/24
3. MNSP Outreach Subcommittee meeting 4/11/24
4. Michigan Monarch Collaborative Meeting 4/16/24
5. Paw Paw Public Schools Salmon Release 4/24/24

New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. None



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Photo



Dr. Alan Franzluebbbers presents at "Farming for the Future," held March 13, 2024 in Lawrence, MI.



SWxSW Corner Cisma

March 2024 Board Report

Prepared 4-03-2024

Staff: [Alex Florian](#) [Abigale Bristol](#) [Jena Johnson](#)

Highlights

The Cisma Team has taken advantage of important meetings and training opportunities to best engage with our community and prepare for the field season. Both attending and leading events, the Cisma Team is spreading the word and building knowledge of the ever-changing world of invasive species.

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Budget adjustments for EGLE Dune grant and MISGP grants
2. Lesser Celandine field visit
3. Surveyed for new Spotted Lantern Fly trapping sites
4. Farming for the Future
5. Niles Library Program
6. Michigan Envirothon
7. VBDL native plant gardening presentation
8. Equipment maintenance
9. Winter Walk with a Naturalist
10. Winter shrub management
11. Prepare for Strike Team interviews

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. Michigan Paddle Stewards partner meeting
2. Spotted Lanternfly stakeholder update
3. Wilderness First Aid Training
4. Viable and Safe Alternatives to Glyphosate Workshop

Upcoming Activities

1. Annual Tree Sale
2. Spring EFB Collaborative Meeting
3. Two Rivers Coalition Monthly Meeting
4. Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum presentation
5. Michigan Lakes and Streams Annual Conference
6. Interview Strike Team Applicants
7. Volunteer Stream Monitoring Event
8. MISGP reporting



SWxSW Corner CISMA

March 2024 Board Report

Prepared 4-03-2024

Staff: Alex Florian Abigale Bristol Jena Johnson

New Grant Proposals Submitted

Species of the Month: Oak Wilt

Overview:

1. Oak Wilt is a fungal disease that infects and kills fungus
2. It is spread locally through the connections between the roots of oak trees
3. It is spread over long distances by insects that are attracted to the pressure pads created by the fungus



Identification:

1. Trees suffering from oak wilt lose their leaves within June–September
2. Some of the fallen leaves are entirely brown or green with a tinge of brown around the edges (see photo above)
3. During the growing season, trees lose leaves first from outer branches and the die-off moves inward.





Van Buren Conservation District

March 2024 MAEAP Board Report

Prepared: April 2024

Staff: Kyle Mead



Highlights:

March was the month that saw payoff for a lot of work being done throughout the year. 26 verifications were scheduled over 3 verification days with MDARD employee Josh Appleby. 3 Verifications needed to be rescheduled and 2 didn't quite meet standards and will be reassessed and hopefully verified soon. On top of all the verifications, the MAEAP Specialist helped with Farming for the Future and also organized and led the Region 4/6 Envirothon Competition at Kalamazoo Nature Center which had 42 competitors and several volunteers from VBCD, Kent CD, and private companies like Four Elements Energy and True North Consulting Forestry.

Percentage Completed: 56.8% of required assessments completed

73.2% of verifications

Activities, Accomplishments, & Challenges

1. 3/6 – Verifications in Bloomingdale and Lawton
2. 3/11 – Follow up assessment for Re-Verification prep
3. 3/14 – Envirothon Committee - Zoom
4. 3/14 – KNC Envirothon visit
5. 3/15 – Reassessment – South Haven
6. 3/19 – Regional Envirothon Comp
7. 3/21 – Helped grower with WUR
8. 3/27 – Verifications – Bloomingdale and Paw Paw
9. 3/28 – Verifications – Martin, Gobles, Paw Paw and South Haven
10. 3/29 – New Assessment – Gobles

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. 3/7 – Envirothon Meeting – Zoom
2. 3/9 – CIG Drong grant meeting – Zoom
3. 3/13 – Farming for the Future
4. 3/14 – Envirothon Meeting – Zoom
5. 3/21 – Envirothon Meeting – Zoom



Van Buren Conservation District

March 2024 MAEAP Board Report

Prepared: April 2024

Staff: Kyle Mead



A*Syst Type	Monthly A*Systs	Fiscal Year to Date A*Systs
Farm*A*Systs:	1	17
Orchard*A*Systs:	1	29
Greenhouse*A*Systs:	1	1
Nursery*A*Systs:		
Crop*A*Systs:		3
Livestock*A*Systs:		1
FWHP*A*Systs:		2
Total Assessments Completed (always year to date):	3	53/ 88 Goal
On Farm Risk Reductions (always year to date):	Database is broken here, way more than 32 RRs	32 / 150 Goal
MAEAP Verifications (always year to date):	21	52 completed YTD (5 FAS, 14 CAS, 0 LAS, 2 FWH) 71 Goal

Photos



Van Buren Conservation District
March 2024 National Association of
Conservation Districts (NACD) Technical
Assistance & Outreach Board Report
Prepared April 2024
Staff: Lucas Hartman Gabriel Francisco



Highlights

The VBCD's annual Farming for the Future conference on March 13th was a major success for targeted resource concern outreach by our conservation technicians. Gabriel, and Lucas organized separate tracks related to conservation in grazing and forestry respectively. 124 people in total attended the event with the majority of landowners seeking additional information on incorporating livestock, and improving grazing systems.

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Gabe's monthly totals
 - a. EQIP Applications submitted
 - i. 4
 - b. CSP Applications Submitted
 - i. 0
 - c. Existing EQIP contracts serviced
 - i. 7
 - d. Existing CSP contracts serviced
 - i. 0
2. Lucas' monthly totals
 - a. EQIP Applications submitted
 - i. 6
 - b. CSP Applications Submitted
 - i. 5
 - c. Existing EQIP contracts serviced
 - i. 10
 - d. Existing CSP contracts serviced
 - i. 3

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. 3/1 - EQIP Planning Meeting - Wildlife Habitat/Forestry
2. 3/7 - CSP Field Visit - Planning for controlled burn and wildflower planting
3. 3/9 - Michigan Family Farms Conference
4. 3/11 - EQIP planning meeting - High tunnel systems



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5. 3/13 - Farming for The Future
6. 3/15 Ag Team Check-in Meeting
7. 3/19 - regional Envirothon - Kalamazoo Nature Center
8. 3/21 - Field visit with Van Buren Youth Camp - Forestry, habitat, and education
9. 3/23 - Byron Center Meats Processor Tour
10. 3/27 - LincPass credentialing appointment in East Lansing
11. 3/28 - EQIP field visit to evaluate Forested wildlife habitat
12. 3/27 - Property Development Meeting
13. 3/29 - EQIP contract obligation for forest management plan and practice design

Grant Deliverables Tracking

Predicted Accomplishments	Fiscal Year Progress to Date
30 Contracts Obligated	7/30
70 Practices/enhancements certified (implemented)	13/70
50 Plans Assisted	26/50
4 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Presentations Given	1/4
2,000 Acres with Improved Management	501/2,000
3,500 Acres with Practices Implemented	875/3,500
150 Clients Reached	28/150
80 New Producers Reached	12/80
50 Historically Underserved Producers Reached	8/50
500 Participants at Educational Presentations	124/500
Historically Underserved Benefited Acres	50/250



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4 New Coalitions or Partnerships	2/4
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New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. Climate Smart Commodities Grant is currently being written. Final Submission date is March 15, 2024 with a hope to hear back by June 1, 2024.

Upcoming Activities

1. Controlled burn to be conducted at VBCD owned property "Butterfield Drain" April 15-30
 - a. First management activity to take place at the west grassland planting in >10 years
 - b. Training opportunity for Conservation district and NRCS staff in SW Michigan.
2. Van Buren Conservation District's Annual "Grazing Day" on Sep. 19th
 - a. 2nd annual grazing day held by the VBCD and hosted by Gabriel Francisco.
 - b. This year's sessions look to be on Rotational Grazing Methods, Pasture Pigs, Rabbit and Chicken Tractors, and Contract Grazing Biosecurity Risks and Protocols.
 - c. Last year's attendance was around 70 representing farms from all across Michigan and northern Indiana.

Photos





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Gabe discussing antibiotic resistance with livestock owners



Lucas and Gabe introducing Farm Bill assistance program opportunities



Van Buren Conservation District

March 2024 Outreach Board Report

Prepared 3/29/2024

Staff: **Jacob Diljak**

Highlights

The 2024 Food, Farm, & Fun Guides will be here in April, so be sure to stop by the VBCD or municipality offices or one of many businesses to get your copy! Keep an eye out for our upcoming events: Tree Sale, South Haven Large Tire Collection, and Decatur Passenger & Semi Tire and Electronics Collection.

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Social media management: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, data tracking
2. Financials: invoice and receipt management
3. General VBCD photography: events, presentations, stock photography
4. VBCD Newsletter: drafting, sending
5. Tree Sale: order and stock management, website fixes, wrapping & pick up planning
6. 2024 Food, Farm, & Fun Guide: customer management, drafts and edits
7. Farming for the Future: event assistance, outreach, photography and videography
8. CISMA: recruitment assistance for Strike Team
9. Paw Paw River Clean Up: planning, grant application and submission
10. Local Work Group: promotion and outreach materials
11. Resource Recovery: promotional materials
12. Macroinvertebrate Stream Monitoring: promotion and outreach
13. South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce: promotional materials delivery
14. 80th Anniversary: promotional posts
15. Van Buren State Trail Project: submission of trail signs to DNR
16. Volunteer Appreciation Opportunity: event coordination and promotion
17. Outdoor Recreation Map: ongoing work

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. Staff meetings (3/5, 3/12, 3/19, 3/26)
2. Outreach Check-In (3/22)
3. 1:1 Outreach Check-In (3/8, 3/22)
4. Hazen Property Evaluation (3/7)
5. Storage Unit Reorganization Planning (3/8)
6. LinkedIn Jobs Training (3/12)
7. Farming for the Future Conference (3/13)
8. Tree Sale Financials & Reconciliation (3/14)
9. Uplift - Using Design to Stand Out on Social (3/20)



Van Buren Conservation District

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Staff: **Jacob Diljak**

10. Volunteer Appreciation & Recruitment Planning (3/20)
11. Hazardous Household Waste Refresher Training (3/21)
12. Tree Sale Preparations (3/25)
13. Start of Season Strategy Meeting (3/29)

New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. Volunteer Stream Cleanup Grant | Michigan Clean Water Corps | \$1,708.31

Upcoming Activities

1. Tree Sale Wrapping (4/8-10)
2. Tree Sale Pick-up & Day of Sale (4/11-13)
3. South Haven Large Tire Collection (4/22-23)
4. VBCD Board Meeting (4/24)
5. Decatur Passenger & Semi Tire and Electronics Collection (4/27)

	Trends	Content	Audience
Facebook	28,100 People Reached	27 Posts	2,325 Page Followers (30 ↑)
Instagram	155 People Reached	24 Posts	279 Followers (12 ↑)
LinkedIn	13 Impressions	1 Post	53 Followers (2 ↑)
YouTube	1,600 Total Views	-	1,135 Subscribers (13 ↑)
TikTok	590 Likes	0 Posts	57 Followers (0 ↑)

Event Category	Number of Events	Impressions
Miscellaneous	0	0
VBCD Events	1	124
Farmers Markets	0	0



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Staff: Jacob Diljak



Water Quality Project Manager Erin Fuller standing amongst the Farming for the Future audience. This event brings experts to local farmers, graziers, and landowners providing them with resources and knowledge to be more economically and environmentally sustainable (3/13).



Lynn Baker demonstrating the dangers of household hazardous waste when improperly disposed during the Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training. Training like this provides staff with knowledge to hold safe recycling collections. (3/21)



Van Buren Conservation District
March 2024 Resource Recovery Board Report
Prepared April 2024
Staff: Kalli Marshall



Highlights

Spring is quickly approaching and we will be starting the collection season soon. Most of the month was filled with preparations for collections, infrastructure grant work, and materials management planning. With part 115 updates, transfer stations are now going through a new site registration and review process. Kalli assisted communities with these challenges and helped them get started on the process.

Activities & Accomplishments

1. Responded to residents who had recycling questions with options for disposal/recycling
2. Submitted appropriate check requests for Gobles Village Market paper/cardboard recycling
3. Scheduled social media posts for March 2024
4. Read resource recovery updates from Michigan Recycling Coalition, The Recycling Partnership, and EGLE to keep informed of trends and changes
5. Tracked electronics collection for March 2024
6. Connected with region and county for Materials Management Planning
7. Worked with waste haulers and materials recovery facilities for detailed education
8. Refreshed Battery Recycling Stations at Libraries
9. Began prepping for Recycling Collections and taking call from residents with questions and sign ups
10. Connected with partner counties to assist with Recycling Infrastructure Grants
11. Coordinated clean up of tractor tires at Pilgrim Haven Park in South Haven
12. Planned Homeschool Hangout sessions as library partnership
13. Revised and strategized Paw Paw Recycle Roundup Site Map
14. Registered for Michigan Recycling Conference
15. Prepared for Decatur Community Dump Day
16. Reviewed educational materials for Recycling infrastructure Grant

Meetings/Trainings Attended

1. 3/4/2024 - Bangor Township Infrastructure Grant Meeting
2. 3/4/2024 - Village of Decatur Council Meeting
3. 3/5/2024, 3/12/2024, 3/26/2024 - VBCD Staff Meeting
4. 3/6/2024, 3/20/2024 - SWMI Materials Management Planning Meeting
5. 3/6/2024 - Green Earth Electronics Annual Check in Meeting
6. 3/13/2024 - Farming for the Future
7. 3/14/2024, 3/28/2024 - The Recycling Partnership Grant Check In
8. 3/20/2024 - Transfer Station Regulation Meeting Paw Paw Township
9. 3/20/2024 - Resource Recovery Admin Meeting
10. 3/20/2024 - Volunteer Appreciation Planning Meeting



Van Buren Conservation District
March 2024 Resource Recovery Board Report
Prepared April 2024
Staff: Kalli Marshall

11. 3/21/2024 - HAZWOPER Refresher Training
12. 3/22/2024 - Homeschool Hangout Bangor Library
13. 3/26/2024 - Arlington Township Transfer Station Site Review
14. 3/27/2024 - Year Round Tire Sites Planning
15. 3/29/2024 - Recycling Season Strategy Meeting

New Grant Proposals Submitted

1. NA

Upcoming Activities

1. Research/develop A*Syst Program booklets for restaurants, organizations, growers, schools, homes, municipalities
2. Hang Recycle, MI signs somewhere impactful
3. Hartford School Recycling Collaboration



Kalli Marshall, Presenting at Lawton Middle School Career Day